

## **Family Handbook** (the “Handbook”)

Smith Memorial Daycare Center  
329 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East, Kalispell MT 59901  
406-755-9224  
[smithmemorial@kalispellumc.org](mailto:smithmemorial@kalispellumc.org)

### **Welcome to Smith Memorial Daycare Center (“the Center”)**

We are happy to have your child here!

We hope it will be a happy learning experience for all attending children. Here at the Center, we strive to create an enriching environment for child development and growth. Our focus is to cultivate independent learners, to ensure a safe emotional and physical space, and to provide opportunities for both academic and social growth. The daily structure of our program provides opportunities for play-based learning as well as classroom instruction learning.

We are a faith-based program in which we intend to share the love of Jesus with children and their families. At the Center, we have a strong staff with a variety of faith backgrounds. We respect each other's differences, and we grow through love and acceptance of these differences. We teach the children with this same respect. We do not have a separate religious education component for any age group.

We do:

- Sing songs about God and Jesus
- Tell Bible stories in developmentally age-appropriate ways
- Pray to God before meals
- Celebrate Christian holidays
- Share stories from other faith traditions when culturally appropriate

If you have any questions, please talk with the Director, the Center’s Board, or the Pastor of Epworth United Methodist Church.

### **Mission Statement**

It is our goal to provide affordable and quality childcare to the children in the Flathead Valley.

### **History**

Smith Memorial Daycare Center began over 55 years ago as a mission of Epworth United Methodist Church. What started as a mission to provide affordable and quality childcare to working families soon became the first licensed childcare facility in Kalispell, Montana in 1966. Through the years of support by volunteers, the community, and the Epworth United Methodist Church, the legacy of the Center lives on.

### **License**

The Center is a licensed childcare center in the State of Montana for children ages 2 through 6 with a total capacity of 56 children per day. At the Center, we enroll children ages 2 through 5 for our academic session programs (in addition to accepting some school-aged children for our summer session program and some holiday breaks). We accept children of any race, creed, or economic status if the

parent/guardian can meet the agreed-upon payment and other requirements described in this Handbook.

## **Programs**

The Center has four active classrooms. We provide a full day program for each of these rooms and follow a structured daily schedule.

Room 1 (orange): two year olds

Room 2 (teal): two and three year olds

Room 3 (purple): three and four year olds

Room 4 (green): four and five year olds (during winter holiday days and the summer session also may have six-year-olds)

## **Daily Schedule**

Each classroom follows the same daily schedule, with minor, age-appropriate, adjustments in time (I.e., lunch and nap will be earlier for the younger students, while the older students will eat and rest a little later). The schedule below is a generalized daily schedule for a typical day at the Center. Actual daily schedules may vary depending on your child's individual classroom, the weather, and other circumstances not within the control of the Center. Children **MUST** be at the Center by 9:30 a.m., and are to be picked up **BEFORE** 5:30 p.m.

7:30 - 9:30: Student Arrival at School and Free Play

9:30 - 9:45: Videos, Music, Books, or Exercise

9:45 - 10:00: Morning Snack

10:00 - 11:00: Classroom Instruction Time

- Circle time, crafts, stories, puzzles, games, centers, and other activities

11:00 - 12:00: Outside Play

- Playground, walks, field trips, and other activities

12:00 - 12:30: Lunch

12:30 - 1:00: Story Time

1:00 - 2:00: Nap/Rest Time

2:00 - 2:30: Wake Up/Quiet Time Activities

2:30 - 3:00: Classroom Activities or Outdoor Play

3:00 - 3:30: Afternoon Snack and Clean-Up

3:30 - 5:00: Free Play in Classrooms or Outside as Parent Pickup Time Occurs

5:00 - 5:30: Videos or table activities as Parents pick up Children

**BrightWheel App** - The Center is using the Brightwheel App for many valuable purposes including parent and staff communication, sending photos of children to their parents and guardians, invoices for billing, tuition payments, signing children in and out of the Center, keeping track of a child's day, and a child's diapers supply. The Brightwheel App is a tool the Center provides for the parents to use. It is an App that can be downloaded on your smart phone with no expense to the family. The child's parent will be sent an invitation to use the App once the child is enrolled at the Center. Feel free to ask Center staff regarding any questions about the Brightwheel App. The staff will work together to solve any issues.

If you pay tuition through the Brightwheel App with a bank account or debit card, there is a fee for each transaction. As of September 2023, this fee was \$0.90 for each transaction. If you pay tuition through the Brightwheel App with a credit card, there is a fee for each transaction. As of September 2023, this fee was 2.9% for each transaction. These fees are processing fees and go directly to the Brightwheel operator, not to the Center.

The Brightwheel App is the preferred means of communication with the Center. For attendance and other updates about a child or the child's family, please message the Center through the Brightwheel App instead of communicating with a phone call.

### **Enrollment**

No child can begin attending the Center before Center staff have interviewed the child to be enrolled, have interviewed the responsible parent(s) or guardian(s), the responsible parent(s) or guardian(s) has toured the Center, and the responsible parent(s) or guardian(s) has completed and signed all necessary paperwork.

### **Attendance Policies**

**Arrival:** Once a child is enrolled, a responsible, identified adult must bring the child to the Center check-in desk. The responsible adult shall check in the child by using the QR code through the Brightwheel App, help the child deposit belongings in an assigned cubby (as needed), and then bring the child to an open and available classroom. Available classrooms are dependent on the drop-off time and the age of the child and other possible factors.

Generally applicable situations for drop-off time and classroom availability-

7:30 - 8:00- all ages of children will be brought to Classroom 3 (purple door).

8:00 - 9:30- ages 2 and 3 will be brought to Classroom 1 or 2 (orange and teal doors).

After 8:00- ages 4 and 5 will be brought to Classroom 3 or 4 (purple and green doors).

Upon departure from the Center, adults must close and lock the blue gate at the top of the stairs and ensure the outside door at ground level is completely closed and locked behind them.

If the child needs additional time to say goodbye after check-in, the library is available for that purpose or to allow the child to wave from the window. In the case of library usage, please alert staff of the situation so that Center staff are aware when the adult departs so that the child can wave goodbye from the window. Staff will then bring the child into the designated classroom.

All children must arrive at the Center BEFORE 9:30 a.m. Doors will not be unlocked after 9:30 a.m., so the adult bringing the child must be timely. Each child's arrival at the Center by 9:30 a.m. allows the child to be at school by morning snack, helps eliminate challenging behavior, supports Center staff, and ensures that all children are timely for classroom learning and projects. If a written notice of a scheduled

late arrival is provided to the Center at least 7 days in advance, the Center may be able to make reasonable accommodations.

**Departure:** Upon arrival for child pickup, the identified adult must sign the child out using the QR code through the Brightwheel App. A child can be picked up upstairs or outside the Center on the playground, weather dependent. If pickup takes place by an adult contact identified on the child's emergency contact list, please ensure that the adult contact has an adequate form of identification to present to the Center's upstairs desk for staff to identify the child's family. A child will be allowed to leave with an adult identified on the child's emergency contact list as authorized to pick up the child. Center staff will release the child to parents or legal guardians, and other persons above the age of 18 on the child's emergency contact list provided by the parent or guardian, if Center staff feel the child is safe departing with the identified person. Center staff will not allow any child to leave the Center with someone who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Persons can be added or deleted from the emergency contact list as the child's parent(s) desires. Any person authorized to pick up a child will be required to show adequate identification. Each child's responsible adult should take home all items in the child's mailbox at the end of the day. On the last day of attendance for the week, the child's responsible adult should take home the child's sleep stuffy and blanket to wash.

### **Gates**

The blue gates to the Center and the fence around the outdoor playground represent the physical boundaries of the Center. In the interest of safety, it is extremely important for children to recognize and to respect those boundaries. To reinforce that recognition and respect, please ensure the blue gates and the playground gates are only operated by adults, and please close and latch these gates when you enter or leave the facility.

### **Cameras**

The Center maintains a network of security cameras within the Center and at the outdoor playground. This network is for the safety of the children and staff in the Center. Classrooms and restrooms are not covered by the camera network.

### **Items to Provide**

Parents and guardians must provide to the Center the following items (labeled with the child's initials or name) for daily use by their children.

All year:

- Small blanket for rest time
- Optional small sleep stuffy
- Extra set of clothes, to be replaced as needed
- Water bottle
- Diapers/pull-ups (if not potty-trained)

Winter time:

- Snow Pants
- Winter coat
- Water-proof mittens/gloves
- Hat
- Snow boots

Summer time:

- Swimsuit
- Sunscreen (if child has sensitive skin from generic brand)

Please make sure all clothing is school and weather appropriate for play indoors and outdoors.

### **Prohibited Items**

Children may not bring candy or gum to the Center. Toys or items from home are prohibited from being brought into the Center. Please leave all such prohibited items in the car or at home.

### **Birthdays**

Many children (and staff) celebrate birthdays at the Center. Packaged treats from home are welcome either for all the children attending the Center that day or for the celebrating child's class only. Snacks, candy, or non-edible items are all acceptable to bring on the child's birthday and will either be collected at the front desk for children to take on their way home or can be distributed only to the children within the celebrating child's class. Parents need to give staff advance directions! Please provide nut free treats to accommodate children with allergies.

### **Days and Hours of Operation**

The Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a. m. to 5:30 p. m.

7:30 a. m. - 9:30 a.m. is the designated drop off time. The bulk of instruction and lesson time for the children is between the hours of 9:30 a. m. and Noon.

Children can be picked up from the Center between 3:30 p. m. and 5:30 p. m. If a child is to be picked up before 3:30 p. m., please provide a written notification of this change in advance. The Center closes promptly at 5:30 p. m. Out of respect for Center staff, and in recognition of their right to be with their families, please make it a priority to pick up children during the scheduled time. For any late pickup, for each minute after 5:30 p.m., one dollar will be charged to the child's tuition bill.

### **Scheduled Closures**

The Center is closed on the following days:

Memorial Day

Independence Day

Friday before Labor Day

Labor Day

Friday after Thanksgiving

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

Center closes at 3 p. m. on New Year's Eve

New Year's Day

Presidents' Day

## **Weather Closures**

For weather-related or other safety emergency closures, the Center will follow the practice of local School District 5. Check with the Director of the Center if unsure about a closure day for the Center.

## **Additional Closures**

The Center also may close on any day when there are 12 or less children attending. The Director will discuss such a situation with the parents and guardians and inform them via the Brightwheel App and the Center's stairwell bulletin board prior to any closure due to low attendance. The Center may schedule to be closed for staff development days, with reasonable notice for families.

## **Outdoors Weather Policy**

Children are taken outside on the playground every day, weather permitting. Parents must make sure their children have the proper clothing to go outside and play every day. In the winter, children go outside unless the temperature is 15 degrees or below. In the summer, children do not go outside if the temperature is over 90 degrees. The Center monitors the air quality index in spring, summer, and fall to ensure the safety of the air for the children while outdoors.

## **Scheduling and Absenteeism**

A child's parent or guardian should notify the Center staff by 9:00 a.m. if a child is sick and cannot attend on a day for which the child is scheduled. This information is used to help track health trends at the Center. Due to the Center's tuition policy and staffing regulations, absent days cannot be credited or exchanged for other attendance days. The tuition policy is described in this Handbook. The Center requires one week advance written notice for a child's planned absence. Scheduling for each child is important. The Center hires staff and provides lunches and snacks based on the number of children scheduled each day. As a nonprofit childcare center, communication with families is vital for the success of the program.

## **Immunization records:**

Upon registration, every child must have a copy of immunization records. All inoculations must be current, BEFORE attending the Center. As a licensed childcare facility, the Center's health records are inspected for license renewal.

## **Sick Child Policy**

Each child must be in good health upon arrival each day. Each child must be free from fever (100 degrees or higher), diarrhea, unexplained rashes, and vomiting for 24 hours before attending the Center. The Center reserves the right to refuse admittance of any child who exhibits any of the forgoing symptoms. All rashes and communicable diseases require a physician's written release prior to returning to the Center. If a child becomes ill at the Center, Center staff will contact the child's parent or guardian and require an authorized adult to pick up the child.

## **Health and Medication**

If a child is on medication, the parent or guardian must fill out and sign the medication authorization forms that the Center will provide. Prescribed medication and over the counter medication each have a separate form to be completed. Medication must be brought to the Center in its original container with

the child's name labeled on it. Only Center teachers who have taken medication administration I and II are able to administer prescribed and over the counter medications.

Parents must bring all medication, creams, cough drops, and other administered remedies to Center staff directly and cannot leave such items in a cubby or backpacks. All such items must be labeled with the child's name. Any and all medication for a child must be given to a staff member at the Center.

### **Emergency Care**

All children are required to have an "emergency treatment" form on file. This form must include the name, relationship, and telephone number of an emergency contact person for the child in the event the parent or guardian cannot be reached. If a child is injured while attending the Center, appropriate first aid will be administered by a teacher or the Center's Director. Center staff is certified in child and adult First Aid and CPR. If a child is injured at the Center, an "accident/injury report" will be filled out which will require the signature of the child's parent or guardian and will be placed in the child's file. This form is to give notice of the event and the action taken. In the event of a serious injury or illness which requires immediate medical treatment, an ambulance will be called, and the parent will be contacted immediately. If a parent or legal guardian cannot be reached, an adult on the emergency contacts list for the child will be notified. The child's family will be responsible for all costs associated with a medical emergency.

### **Emergency Evacuation Plan**

Fire drills are conducted at least once a month. Evacuation plans are posted at each exit.

### **Nutrition**

The Center provides a nutritious lunch and two snacks a day to children in attendance. Meals are served family style. Lunches and snacks from home are only permitted due to a child's food aversions or allergies. A monthly food menu is posted in the Center's stairwell bulletin board. If a child has an allergy, the parent or guardian must inform the Center's Director immediately, and an allergy form must be completed for the child. The Center may be able to make some reasonable accommodation for a child's food allergy.

### **Best Beginnings Program**

The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program is a financial scholarship option for qualified low-income families offered through the State of Montana. Online applications are available at the website identified below for children attending the Center. Program eligibility is for working families whose income is less than 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. Eligibility is evaluated and a co-payment is determined based on the Child Care Sliding Fee Scale.

< <https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/bestbeginningsscholarships> >

### **Mandatory Reporting**

All staff at the Center have an ethical and legal mandate to report any suspicion of child neglect or abuse promptly within 24 hours of having reason to suspect any neglect or abuse.

**Pictures** - Photos are taken of the children at the Center to share with their families through the Brightwheel App. This use is our primary use of photography. In addition, photos are printed for use in the Center and Epworth United Methodist Church newsletters and bulletin boards. The Center operates

an active website, as well as a Facebook account and an Instagram account. However, no photos are posted to social media or to the Center's website without parent or guardian authorization on the Center's photo policies forms set forth below. By signing these forms, the child's parent or guardian consents to the use of the child's name and/or photo for these purposes described above.

### **Transportation**

The Center does not provide daily transportation to and from the Center. However, sometimes parents carpool together for a particular event. In the event of a field trip, parents will be notified of the activity in advance, and a form for signature by parent or guardian will be presented at that time for documentation of the departure from the Center by means of bus or other transport.

### **Behavior**

The Center requires a safe, nurturing, loving, and caring environment. Consistency and repetition are essential for children. At the Center, appropriate behavior by children is encouraged through positive reinforcement, re-direction, choice-making, and respectful actions. If a child exhibits challenging or inappropriate behavior, a time-out or calm down period may be utilized. A time-out or calm down period is no longer than five minutes for older children and two to three minutes for younger children.

Behavior management has not been a major problem at the Center. However, if a child refuses to comply with a time-out or calm down period, becomes uncooperative, or is aggressive towards other children or Center staff, the parent or guardian will be contacted and told to pick up the child for the day. This process is to ensure the safety of all children and staff in the Center.

In the event a child inflicts physical harm on another person or shows a pattern of aggressive or disruptive behavior or engages in other challenging behavior, the parent or guardian will be notified.

The Center may work with the parent or guardian to create a plan of action to prevent such behavior from occurring again. In the event such a plan is created and the child's behavior does not significantly improve within two weeks, or the safety or well-being of the Center staff or other children is threatened, the Center unilaterally, in its sole discretion, may terminate the child's enrollment.

The Center strives to serve all children enrolled in its program. However, there may be situations when the Center's program is not the best option for a child or the child's family. If a child requires additional resources that the Center does not provide, the Center unilaterally may terminate enrollment immediately in its sole discretion.

Possible consequences for challenging behavior include -

1. Staff will correct and redirect behavior.
2. Staff will require a time-out or calm down period.
3. If behavior is escalating, or the safety of others is at risk, the behavior will be documented in writing and shared with the Center's Director and the child's parent or guardian.
4. After parent or guardian involvement, if the behavior continues, the parent or guardian will meet with the Center's Director to determine other options for the child's needs and to change the challenging behavior.
5. Immediate termination of enrollment for a child who engages in aggressive and violent behavior directed towards other children or Center staff.



## **Biting Policy**

Unfortunately, biting is not an uncommon form of communication in childcare settings. The Center's staff strive to identify the underlying cause of any biting by a child, in the context of the actual situation. To redirect this behavior, it is crucial to identify what the child is trying to communicate. Teething, frustration, anxiety, fear, boredom, and attention-seeking are all common reasons for children to bite. The Center aims to solve this issue in the classroom. If the issue cannot be resolved by redirection in the classroom, this policy outlines the procedures in place to ensure the safety of all children enrolled in the program.

For the child that was bitten:

1. First aid is given to the child. The wound will be cleaned appropriately with soap and water. If the skin is broken, then the wound will be covered with a bandage.
2. Injured child's parents will be notified via Brightwheel App immediately of incident.
3. An "Injury Report" form will be filled out and kept at the Center.

For the child that bit:

1. Teachers utilize redirection and teaching tools.
2. Teachers may provide a calm down or time-out period in the classroom.
3. The parents or legal guardians will be notified of the incident.
4. A "Behavior Report" form will document the incident and be kept on file at the Center.

When biting continues:

1. If a child bites twice within a 1-hour period, the parents or guardian must pick up the child for the remainder of the day.
2. If a child inflicts 3 bites in which the skin of another child is bruised or broken, within a one-week period, a meeting will be set up with the parents or guardians.
3. Upon the infliction of 3 additional bites in which the skin is bruised or broken, in the span of one-week, the child will be required to have a one-week absence from the Center.
4. If the child inflicts 3 bites again in which the skin is bruised or broken, in the duration of one-week, the Center reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment.

## **Assessment Period**

Each child upon initial enrollment in a new academic session is subject to a thirty days assessment period. During that assessment period, the Center will determine in its sole discretion whether the Center and its staff provide an appropriate setting for the child to continue for the remainder of that academic session. If the Center determines in its sole discretion that it is not the appropriate setting for the child, the Center unilaterally, in its sole discretion, may terminate the enrollment of the child.

## **Termination**

The Center hopes that the relationship with you and your child will be a long and enjoyable one. However, many circumstances may occur which make it necessary for either you or the Center to end the relationship. Accordingly, either party may terminate this relationship on 30 days prior written notice to the other party. The Center unilaterally can terminate your child's enrollment immediately, in its sole discretion, under the following circumstances:

1. If you are consistently late picking up your child (defined as three occurrences within the same calendar month.)

2. If you are consistently late dropping off your child at the Center (defined as three occurrences within the same calendar month).
3. If you are consistently late paying your child's tuition bill (defined as being late two or more times without prior agreement with the Center's Director.)
4. If there is continuous misbehavior by your child.
5. If there is physical or verbal abuse or threat towards Center staff or other children or persons *at* the Center made by you, your child, or a person identified on your emergency contacts list.
6. The child's parent or guardian fails to comply or to cooperate with directions given by Center staff.

### **Tuition Rates**

The Center operates on the basis of two academic sessions. One session begins in September and runs into May. The other session is in the summer.

As of January 1, 2024, our daily tuition rate per child is \$45.

Tuition is to be paid every two weeks, on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the last day of every month. Invoices are sent out via the Brightwheel App two days before the bill is due.

Tuition payment is accepted through the Brightwheel App (credit card, debit card, or automatic withdrawal from bank), cash, or by check.

Tuition liability is contracted as described hereinbelow. Tuition is payable regardless whether your child attended or was absent on days previously identified by you on the signed Commitment for Scheduled Attendance Days form set forth later in this Handbook. Additional days may be added to the child's daily attendance in addition to those you previously identified if space is available in the child's appropriate classroom. Tuition payments for any added days will be in addition to the contracted tuition payment payable for the previously identified days. Any added days cannot be exchanged for identified days when a child was absent.

### **Late Fee**

If no tuition payment is made for a child during any 35 days of attendance by that child, the Center in its sole discretion may suspend the child's enrollment immediately until tuition payments owing are received by the Center or other arrangements acceptable to the Center are made.

### **NSF Fee**

A \$10.00 NSF fee will be charged for any bank returned check.

### **Holding Fee**

If a child desires to attend the Center in the next academic session beginning in September and is not scheduled to attend the summer academic session, a \$100 non-refundable fee per child must be paid to hold a space for the child for that autumn academic session. This \$100 will not be applied to any daily charges and only secures a classroom space for the child for that autumn academic session.

**[1] Smith Memorial Daycare Center Photo Release: Center and Church Authorization**

I, the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give the teachers at Smith Memorial Daycare Center permission to photograph the above-named child during childcare hours. The pictures and name of the student may be used for parent/teacher communication, arts and crafts, and public display in the Center and in newsletters by the Smith Memorial Daycare Center staff and Epworth United Methodist Church.

Parent or Legal Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Smith Memorial Daycare Center Director Signature and Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

**[2] Smith Memorial Daycare Center Photo Release: Social Media and Website Use**

I, the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give the teachers at Smith Memorial Daycare Center permission to photograph the above-named child during childcare hours. The pictures and name of the student may be used for advertising purposes on the Smith Memorial Daycare Center social media pages (Facebook and Instagram) and inclusion on the Center's website by the Smith Memorial Daycare Center staff.

Parent or Legal Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Smith Memorial Daycare Center Director Signature and Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

**[3] Smith Memorial Daycare Center Photo Release: Brightwheel Communication**

I, the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give the teachers at Smith Memorial Daycare Center permission to photograph the above-named child during childcare hours. The pictures and name of the student may be used for parent/teacher communication via the Brightwheel App by the Smith Memorial Daycare Center staff.

Parent or Legal Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Smith Memorial Daycare Center Director Signature and Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Commitment for Scheduled Attendance Days

By signing this form, I agree that I have received a copy of the Smith Memorial Daycare Family Handbook and that I understand the Handbook's contents. The Handbook contents include the Smith Memorial Daycare Center's policies and procedures which apply to me and my child. No statement or comment previously made by the Center or its staff about policies, procedures, or practices is valid or binding unless it appears in writing in the Handbook. The contents of this Handbook supersede and replace all previous policies, procedures, and practices of the Center and previous versions of the Handbook.

I hereby agree to make timely payments to the Smith Memorial Daycare Center for my identified child to attend the following days \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ of each and every week, except for holidays identified in the Handbook, at the Center during the academic session beginning on \_\_\_\_\_ and ending on \_\_\_\_\_. I acknowledge and agree that I am liable to make timely payments for my child in accord with the Handbook's policies and procedures for the days identified above and even for days when my child does not attend regardless of the reason for such absence,

In addition to other reasons for disenrollment of a child from attending the Center as provided in the Handbook, either the Center or the signatory for this acknowledgement and agreement can terminate their contractual relationship, without cause, upon thirty (30) days prior written notice given to the other party.

Name and contact information for parent or legal guardian:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or legal guardian signature and date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of child and birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and date for Center's Director:

\_\_\_\_\_